

2 January 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Richard Lehman

VIA: Director, Center for the Study of Intelligence

FROM: DCI Fellow

SUBJECT: Proposal for a Seminar on Estimates

1. During the course of research into the impact of intelligence on the policy review and decision process, it again became quite clear that the National Intelligence Estimates--long considered by the Intelligence Community as its premier product--are not well regarded by policy makers and do not figure actively in policy decisions. Complaints that NIEs are inadequate and irrelevant are almost as old as the process itself. Sherman Kent, the father of ONE, addressed the problem in 1969. Fritz Ermarth came to similar conclusions when he examined the problem for the IC Staff in 1976, as did a CSI study on Estimates in 1977. Now this issue has surfaced again in discussions with policy makers.

2. The Center for the Study of Intelligence has found that problems of this kind are illuminated and even clarified when concerned specialists can be gathered together to review the problem. The CSI seminar papers disseminated after such sessions have brought the views expressed to a broad range of interested readers.

3. The establishment of the National Intelligence Council and the NIC Analytic Group, and the accompanying changes in the structure of NFAC, offer a good occasion for convening a group to review the NIE process. With your concurrence, therefore, we propose to host a Seminar on the Estimative Process on the afternoon of 27 February 1980, ~~27~~ 28 February 1980. We would like to invite members of the Intelligence Community who will play, or who have played, significant roles in the estimates process. We would also like to invite one or two academicians who have concerned themselves with intelligence estimates and perhaps some representative policy consumers.

SUBJECT: Proposal for a Seminar on Estimates

4. We offer the following questions for discussion:

--What should the role of National Estimates be in making foreign policy? Do they serve that purpose today? Has our experience been different in the past?

--How can the Intelligence Community overcome what appears to be a policy maker "mind set" against Estimates? Or should it try?

--What are the proper elements of an Estimate? How should they be structured?

--Is there an ideal methodology for preparing an Estimate? Should the goal be to reach consensus? Is alternative analysis useful?

5. In order to give each of the participants a basis for discussion, CSI would like to distribute a short issues paper prior to the seminar. We will coordinate the paper with your office and in the process incorporate ideas from you and your associates. We will also clear with your office a suggested list of participants.

6. We have already detected a fair amount of enthusiasm for an Estimates Seminar in the Community. We hope that the kind of discussion we have in mind will not only set the tone for what might be considered a new stage in estimative intelligence, but also serve as a forum for those who will be doing the work.

